

**Thomas Jefferson to Edward Rutledge, June 24, 1797,  
with Draft, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in  
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by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**TO EDWARD RUTLEDGE J. MSS.**

Philadelphia, June 24, 97.

My Dear Sir, —I have to acknowledge your two favors of May 4 & 19, and to thank you for your attentions to the commissions for the peas & oranges, which I learn are arrived in Virginia. Your draft I hope will soon follow on Mr. John Barnes, merchant, here; who, as I before advised you, is directed to answer it.

When Congress first met, the assemblage of facts presented in the President's speech, with the multiplied accounts of spoliations by the French West Indians, appeared by sundry votes on the address, to incline a majority to put themselves in a posture of war. Under this influence the address was formed, & its spirit would probably have been pursued by corresponding measures, had the events of Europe been of an ordinary train. But this has been so extraordinary, that numbers have gone over to those, who, from the first, feeling with sensibility the French insults, as they had felt those of England before, thought now as they thought then, that war measures should be avoided, & those of peace pursued. Their favorite engine, on the former occasion, was *commercial regulations*, in preference to negotiations, to war preparations & increase of debt. On the latter, as we have no commerce with France, the restriction of which could press on them, they wished for negotiation. Those of the opposite sentiment had, on the former occasion, preferred negotiation, but at the same time voted for great war preparations, and increase of debt; now also they were for negotiation, war preparations & debt. The parties have

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in debate mutually charged each other with inconsistency, & with being governed by an attachment to this or that of the belligerent nations, rather than the dictates of reason & pure Americanism. But, in truth, both have been consistent; the same men having voted

for war measures who did before, & the same against them now who did before. The events of Europe coming to us in astonishing & rapid succession, to wit, the public bankruptcy of England, Buonaparte's successes, the successes on the Rhine, the Austrian peace, mutiny of the British fleet, Irish insurrection, a demand of 43. millions for the current services of the year, and, above all, the warning voice, as is said, of Mr. King, to abandon all thought of connection with Great Britain, that she is going down irrecoverably, & will sink us also, if we do not clear ourselves, have brought over several to the pacific party, so as, at present, to give majorities against all threatening measures. They go on with frigates and fortifications, because they were going on with them before. They direct 80,000 of their militia to hold themselves in readiness for service. But they reject the propositions to raise cavalry, artillery, & a provisional army, & to trust private ships with arms in the present combustible state of things. They believe the present is the last campaign of Europe, & wish to rub through this fragment of a year as they have through the four preceding ones, opposing patience to insult, & interest to honor. They will, therefore, immediately adjourn. This is, indeed, a most humiliating state of things, but it commenced in 93. Causes have been adding to causes, & effects accumulating on effects, from that time to this. We had, in 93, the most respectable character in the universe. What the neutral nations think of us now, I know not; but we are low indeed with the belligerents. Their kicks & cuffs prove their contempt. If we weather the present storm, I hope we shall avail ourselves of the calm of peace, to place our foreign connections under a new & different arrangement. We must make the interest of every nation stand surety for it's justice, & their own loss to follow injury to us, as effect follows its cause. As to everything except commerce, we ought to divorce ourselves from them all. But this system would require time, temper, wisdom, & occasional sacrifice of interest; & how far all of these will be

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ours, our children may see, but we shall not. The passions are too high at present, to be cooled in our day. You & I have formerly seen warm debates and high political passions. But gentlemen of different politics would then speak to each other, & separate the business of the Senate from that of society. It is not so now. Men who have been intimate all their lives, cross the streets to avoid meeting, & turn their heads another way, lest they should be obliged to touch their hats. This may do for young men with whom passion is enjoyment. But it is afflicting to peaceable minds. Tranquillity is the old man's milk. I go to enjoy it in a few days, & to exchange the roar & tumult of bulls & bears, for the prattle of my grand-children & senile rest. Be these yours, my dear friend, through long years, with every other blessing, & the attachment of friends as warm & sincere, as yours affectionately.